
Henry James's World of Images

Author(s): R. W. Short

Source: *PMLA*, Vol. 68, No. 5 (Dec., 1953), pp. 943-960

Published by: Modern Language Association

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/459994>

Accessed: 10-01-2016 09:20 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Modern Language Association is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *PMLA*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

HENRY JAMES'S WORLD OF IMAGES

BY R. W. SHORT

MINDFUL of Josephine Miles's question: "If the problem [of imagery] is subjective, how can it result in tables and charts?"¹ I shall offer here only the simplest classifications, for the sake of imposing a surface neatness upon the presentation of protean material. After some introductory generalizations about James's imagery, I shall appear to be discussing the whole subject in terms of the areas of existence or experience most used by James as sources for his imagery. The problem is that one cannot draw close to James's vital imagery of any single sort without knowing something about the other sorts, so cooperatively do the major images-areas complement each other; but we must start somewhere. In my second division I shall discuss images-areas used throughout the later works, but not independently thematic in any given work. In the last division I shall treat image-areas found unusually concentrated within given works; and here the given work itself will help to hold the materials together.

Within this simple framework I shall try to make all distinctions on grounds as functional and subjective as organizational exigencies permit. That is, I shall not try for watertight compartments, nor to fill up the traditional, nor to invent new compartments, but to relate the most operative kinds of images to what they seem to be doing where they are found. From this presentation will emerge, mainly of their own accord, lineaments of a cosmology, which could be combined with evidence from other sources to make a full account of the James world. Only the late style will be fully explored.

I

In very general terms, what sort of imagery does the reader find in the works of James?

James began by reproducing in his fictions the conventional concretely visualized "settings," which, along with much else, he took over from his English and Continental predecessors. He employed dutiful and often zestful spurts of imagery to characterize his actions and, more often, his characters. Later, as he gained in coherence and textural consistency, his settings faded toward ectoplasmic manifestations and his characterizing images became subdued, the robustious sort generally used only to finish off quickly an unimportant person or place. Yet to the end, the old Dickensian touch occasionally erupted. Kate Croy once felt for all the world "like the housemaid giggling to the baker" (*WD*,

¹ *Sewanee Rev.*, LVIII (Summer 1950), 523.

p. 56);² of Lady Julia we hear: "Her ornamental information—as strong as a coat of furniture-polish—almost knocked you down" (*SF*, p. 17). Mr. Croy "dealt out lies as he might the cards from the greasy old pack for the game of diplomacy to which you were to sit down with him" (*WD*, p. 7).

In the next two examples, from an early-middle piece,³ I have placed parentheses around expressions added by James in revision, as indicative of the direction his mature image-making had taken: Mme. Poupin, of brief appearance, was thus presented: "... it had come to be known that his wife was somehow not his wife—though she was certainly no one's else; and the evidence of this irregularity was conceived to reside vaguely in the fact that she had never been seen save in (the laxity of) a camisole" (II, 256). Mrs. Crookenden, wooing Hyacinth for a son-in-law, was somewhat similarly projected: "[she] who had on her head the plumage of a cockatoo mingled with a structure of glass beads, looked at him with an almost awful fixedness (of charity) and asked him three distinct times if he would have a glass of negus" (II, 258). The changes represent a movement from an originally keen, bare observation, humorous or serious, toward a conceptualized observation, toward wit, implication, suggestion, and multi-dimensionality. In the late style, sunken images,⁴ similes, and other attenuated forms far outnumber the monolithic metaphors or metonymies of simple sensuousness.

Images to stand for a relationship between person and person, or between person and situation, are more common than images to "fix" a person or place. This sort becomes almost the rule: "... marriage was somehow before them [Kate and Densher] like a temple without an avenue. They belonged to the temple and they met in the grounds" (*WD*, p. 59). Or again, this description of Rosanna Gow on the first page of *The Ivory Tower*: "Her other draperies, white and voluminous, yielded

² Citations from James are keyed as follows: *Amb*, *GB*, *IT*, *PC*, *SP*, and *WD* represent respectively *The Ambassadors*, *The Golden Bowl*, *The Ivory Tower*, *The Princess Casamassima*, *The Sense of the Past*, and *The Wings of the Dove*, in the New York Edition; *SF*—*The Sacred Fount* (Scribner's: New York, 1901); *Notebooks*—*The Notebooks of Henry James*, ed. F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock (Oxford Univ. Press, 1947); *Prefaces*—*The Art of the Novel*, ed. Richard P. Blackmur (Scribner's, 1934).

³ *The Princess Casamassima* (Macmillan & Co., 1886). Every image in this first edition has been collated with the revised version of it in the New York Edition of 1908. The revisions affecting imagery far outnumber all others put together. It would seem that James was critically aware of the uses of imagery, though the Prefaces do not show this. To indicate this is my reason for citing *PC* so often in a paper devoted mainly to the later style.

⁴ Images in which part, usually the most obviously sensuous part, is suppressed. From Henry Wells, *Poetic Imagery* (Columbia Univ. Press, 1924), pp. 76 et seq.

to the mild breeze in the manner of those of a ship held back from speed yet with its canvas expanded; they conformed to their usual law of suggestion that the large loose ponderous girl . . . lived, as they said about her, in wrappers and tea-gowns . . .” Society had it, figuratively, that Rosanna lived in wrappers and tea-gowns. That image is refined by the ship-image, itself carefully qualified; or, a ship is described, so that it may in turn describe Rosanna’s clothes, so that they may describe her. The most vivid parts of the construct apply to the ship; but Rosanna stands bathed in the very searching light which filters through the palimpsest of images. Equally typical is this even more elaborately extended and layered image-complex from *The Golden Bowl*. The Prince speaks and thinks in English, for in his present unfamiliar situation he finds that language “convenient . . . for the greatest number of relations.” Maggie tells him he speaks English almost too well, and we feel that it is the rectitude of his grammar, with perhaps some moral fibre in the language itself, that makes it here appropriate, for he is determining to make a good husband and son-in-law. As he says: “‘When I speak worse, you see, I speak French,’ . . . intimating thus that there were discriminations, doubtless of the invidious kind, for which that language was the most apt.” For already he is “ . . . not unmindful that there might still, as time went on, be others [relations], including a more intimate degree of *that* one, that would seek, possibly with violence, the larger or the finer issue—which was it?—of the vernacular.” Other real or fancied language-bents come into the passage: The Prince is “practising his American in order to converse properly, on equal terms as it were, with Mr. Verver,” whose direct, unaccommodating moral sense has struck the Prince with an uneasy admiration. Mr. Verver, he says, switching to Italian, “is a *real* galantuomo—and no mistake,” whereas for himself, reverting to his “worse” language, French: “I’m like a chicken, at best, chopped up and smothered in sauce; cooked down as a *crème de volaille*, with half the parts left out” (pp. 5–8). The whole role of the Prince, in a word, is prefigured in this outwardly playful image-sequence: his good intentions, his sense of debtorship, his fluent morality, and his future course.

Such images create meaning without delimiting it, meaning that grows with the action and becomes the action. Without their clouds we should not know the tabernacle to be there. In themselves, they contain many sense-seizable facts, but so obliquely applied that the subject is left floating and breathing, instead of pinned and wriggling as the earlier images sometimes left their referents. The above sequence does not say, nor has it been said before, that Amerigo’s complexity will fail to harmonize with Mr. Verver’s simplicity; but an ominous potential has

begun to gather head. To use one of James's phrases, the cumulative effect of these images is to push "upward and still further upward the fine flower of the inferential" (*IT*, p. 216).

James thus characterized his persons by imagery, but he did not make them speak in imagery peculiar to themselves. When they use images, which they do not do as often as James does in talking about them, they opportunistically tap his own varied sources. The exceptions to this principle are insignificant, as Mrs. Stringham's appropriately bathetic images to express her adulation of Milly: "It's a Veronese picture [she once says], as near as can be—with me as the inevitable dwarf, the poor blackamoor, put into a corner of the foreground for effect" (*WD*, II, 206). James liked to catch humble persons thrusting their humility into the foreground; some of Mrs. Stringham's genteel imagery throws this trait of hers into momentary contrast with her undeniable virtues. Maggie Verver (p. 15) is said to "have" images of the mechanical sort, but although the novel contains very many, James himself uses most of them and the remainder are distributed among the characters, with Maggie getting few or none. As a matter of fact, she uses few images of any sort.

II

The recurrent images discussed in this section are not importantly thematic in any single work. They would seem to be the casual, common stuff of James's world, capable of anything, from simple to complex, from banal to highly serious. My treatment will progress roughly from functionally simple to complex images, but with the understanding that exceptions occur everywhere.

The first four areas—*flowers*, *birds*, *art*, and the *East*—furnish images that are ready-made, loosely predicative, simple enough in their ordinary occurrences. *Flowers* yields *blossom* and *bud* as its commonest variants. They may imply growth and culmination, or fragility, or merely stand as mild enliveners of diction:

Winterbourne took it in; he stood staring at the raw protuberance [Daisy's grave] among the April daisies. (*DM*, p. 93)

. . . this flower [an opinion] was gathered as from a large field of comparison . . . (*DM*, p. 12)

She felt that when one met a human flower as fresh as that in the dusty ways of the world one should pluck it and wear it . . . (*PC*, II, 271)

At a high moment, Maggie Verver, having determined to save her threatened happiness by matching evil with guile, "plumped out for him [her Prince] her first little lie" (*GB*, p. 328). Simultaneously she dropped a "flower," which the Prince picked up and returned to her no less

amiably than he saw through her lie. Here the image, perhaps itself too colorless to be wholly effective, serves a turn for which James consistently used images, to underline a structurally important act, speech, or situation, which by reason of its slightness might otherwise pass unnoticed.

Ornithology is drawn upon, not quite so often, but in much the same way as floriculture: *bird* and *wing* occur about evenly; less often we meet *nightingale* or *dove* or *eagle*, and still less often references to other birds. The uses are modest and stock, except in a few cases, as in *The Wings of the Dove*; and even here the dove symbol is not itself especially pregnant. Its force derives from interaction with other image-series; with them, it will be discussed later.

Art as a source of imagery is discussed in clear focus by Austin Warren. Relating it to the type of "conventional" images, Warren notices the most interesting use to which James put this branch of his cultural equipment.

Now [late period, after the travels] people remind him of art, become indeed works of art. His heroines, almost without exception, are thus translated. The auburn-haired Milly Theale is a Bronzino; Aurora Coyne becomes "an Italian princess of the *cinque cento*: Titian or the grand Veronese might . . . have signed her image." Nan, the modernist and un-British daughter of *The Sense of the Past*, recalls "some mothering Virgin by Van Eyck or Memling." For Maggie there is evoked some slim draped statue from the Vatican, . . . Mme de Vionnet's head could be found in "an old precious medal, some silver coin of the Renaissance," while her daughter is a "faint pastel in an oval frame . . . the portrait of an old-time princess."⁵

Similar to the art images are those drawn from the East: pagoda, palanquin, Buddha, Juggernaut, turban, Oriental rugs, and other paraphernalia of the romantic Orientalism which so colored the literature, art, architecture, and interior decoration of James's middle period. Lush uses of this material, such as we find in the presentations of Fanny Asingham and Rosanna Gow, have hardly greater import than the Turkey carpet in the Georgian drawing room; in both cases the principal aim would seem to have been to achieve variety in ornamentation, or to create an interesting effect, without a studied reference to the basic context.

From six other favorite subject-matters, James often drew images less conventional in composition and effect. They are: *Light-dark*, *height-depth*, *society-money*, *warfare*, *drama*, and *meals*.

We recognize the main difference between these and the previous images by their effect and by the author's loving care of them. In experiencing the first images, we get little help from him. If the word *flower*,

⁵ *Rage for Order* (Chicago Univ. Press, 1948), p. 149.

dove, Memling, pagoda, or Buddha fails of significance for us, then the image has an equivalent failure. Contrarily, these next images, perhaps no more numerous, are more frequently used in such a way that an illuminated perception of the image itself is forced upon us at exactly the same time that the image illuminates the entity to which it applies. Response is hence coerced, governed. Elaboration is more common; the images are put to more serious, structural uses (with many exceptions, as always).

They appear obsessive. Whether they engage the obsessions of the author, the reader, the culture, or the race will not be decided here. I mean in part that the author uses them more frequently than the occasions of his art seem to demand, but I mean more than that. When an image of the kind that is endued in use with momentary life is used over and over again, it picks up some added dimension of richness, begins to create its own peculiar myth, bridging not only its own separate uses but the author's separate works. And images of this kind reach out to others, even to those of unlike substance, in cosmogonical effect. The pastels, the Titians, the Greek relics, and Eastern domes (to take one class) also occur often, and often effectively, in the work of James; but they do not pick up this peculiar glow, because the author has not nursed and nourished each instance both for its immediate office and for its own sake. The elaboration of one, say the Bronzino image, is not enough to link it significantly with the relatively inert others.

Yet some of the image-areas productive of the intenser images present awkward problems to one concerned mainly with qualitative distinctions. These problems had better be mentioned, lest we seem to be claiming more virtue for the images than the careful reader will find for himself. For example, perhaps no more than a quarter of the light-dark or height-depth images show the livelier qualities. By and large, they are not interestingly varied: nine times out of ten, *light* and *height* occur. Their opposites are usually the conventional ones: deep, profound, bottom, gloomy, shadow, and so forth, with abyss (like dazzling) perilously close to being an ineffectual mannerism.

I have not made a separate classification of images based on *air*, choosing to regard them as close relatives of the height or light images, either literally, as *upper air* equals *height*, or figuratively, as referring to a realm that is purer or freer than some other realm represented by a contrasting element or location. The figures of this kind, whether of height or atmosphere, generally make a loose, general moral or psychological comment, specialized (if this be done) by auxiliary, tied-in images.

Yet even in their tritest forms, these images often assume an insistent, obsessive quality, forcing their homely implications upon us by sheer repetition. They are among those words of James which are sometimes

creating and sometimes uncreating, and almost belong in the list of verbal mannerisms that will be given later. When the Princess Casamassima is first introduced, within two pages we find sixteen conventional light images and four images of darkness. Although this density does not prevail throughout, the light-dark images are probably over numerous and too frequently subjected to gaudy elaboration. But when James revised the novel, though he gave up two of the light images, he added thirteen new ones and six new images of the dark. Of course, we are here confronted with an exceptional case, in that light-dark images are functionally thematic in *The Princess Casamassima*, with results that are partly magnificent. Yet had not James added so many in revision, we should have dismissed the insistence and the frequent triteness on grounds of his inexperience.

Another sort of problem arises from the society-money images. James's demands upon the social percipience of his readers in some ways exceed those made by Proust or Molière. Since his society furnishes not only the setting but the criteria for his moralities, his social facts quiver with significance; at the same time they impose an arduous responsibility upon us. In his outline for *The Ivory Tower*, for example, he told how his choice of setting was to clarify our sense of Gussie's financial standing: "It's perfectly in order that she may have taken [a Newport house] for the summer—and that having let the Lennox place at that time may figure as a sort of note of the crack in her financial aspect that is part, to *call* it part, of my concern" (p. 355). We were also to know what would be implied about people if they came to Newport in June rather than in August. Upon such social-financial niceties depends our recognition of the avarice theme in its early manoeuvres. In the Prefaces he often gloated over the functionality of his chosen locations, quite justly over the Paris of *The Ambassadors* and perhaps over some of the others. Yet we may easily overlook the full precision of, say, Woollett, "an old and enlightened Eastern community in short," as he described it in the *Note-books* (p. 379), "which is yet not the seat of one of the bigger colleges (which for special reasons I don't want)." Fine spun, to be sure, but with James no choices are accidental: he wills our attention to them all.

Everything counts. The teacup is offered: Fanny lets the Prince see Charlotte. A bishop sits at Mrs. Lowder's right hand: Lord Mark is in abeyance. Paul Muniment instead of the Princess pays for the cab: he has become her lover.

Money, of course, figures in the James fictions as a social fact of prime importance. We should be misled if we accepted the curious current notion that he made his persons financially independent in order to free them for concern with other problems. As a matter of fact, the majority of his characters need or want more money than they have, and the mo-

tive of active avarice occurs almost as centrally as in the works of Balzac.

For the most part the ubiquitous monetary images are simple metonymies—dollars or pounds or golden guineas standing for price or wealth—or they are applications of minting, coinage, the market, bank, treasury, sell, buy, and interest in equally simple, direct senses. Like all James's recurrent images, however, they may on occasion become charged with extraordinary significance. As a poignant and sinister example the reader may recall the parable of buying and selling, offered without explicit comment, in *The Golden Bowl*. Mr. Verver has just had the happy notion of marrying Charlotte to keep her out of Maggie's way. While Charlotte considers his proposal, they undertake a small art-buying errand together in Brighton.⁶ This errand occupies six pages of close detail; there is even a description of Mr. Gutterman-Seuss's house, where the polite, heartless, decent-sordid transaction takes place. An image is formed which is perhaps climactic in the long series devoted to Mr. Verver's well-intentioned transactions in human happiness—a series which provides the critical comment that no available register, reflector, or *ficelle* is sufficiently disinterested to make.

To let these images of *light-dark* and *society-money* speak wholly for themselves would require examples too numerous and too unwieldy. A complicated set of ambiguities is involved, which must be briefly summarized. For James, as for Milton, light together with height and air was good, and dark was bad. Moral progress is from dark to light. But the best people are often at their best, or nearing their best, in their darkest moments and environments; and conversely, bad people may be associated with light. In *The Princess Casamassima*, Hyacinth's background, Paul Muniment's as well, and the whole jungle side of London where they work and live, are described in figures of darkness, whereas the world of society, of the Princess especially, but also of Hyacinth's unlucky putative father and of his own aspirations, are seen as light. Light enters the realm of darkness with the humanitarian ventures of the Princess (Christina Light) and the Lady Aurora. And at the same time, indigenous light (virtue) shines among the creatures of dark, and darkness is discovered to inhere in the meretricious radiance of the Princess. Society—high society, that is—radiates light, because only here may the essential lamps of intellect and refinement burn unobstructed. So, ordinarily, moving from bad to good entails moving upward in society. Milly Theale, Strether, and Daisy Miller move upward (Schenectady is *not* a better place than Vevey); but so do the Kate Croys and a whole

⁶ Another meaningful setting. "Brighton . . . where the twinkling sea and the breezy air, the great friendly, fluttered, animated, many-coloured 'front,' would emphasise the note I wanted; that of the strange and sinister embroidered on the very type of the normal and easy." Said of "Sir Edmund Orme," *Prefaces*, p. 216, but applicable here as well.

company of moralless *arrivistes*. The lamps equally attract avarice and virtue. Satan never fell. He operates as freely in Heaven as in Hell, and more dangerously. Everything in society is good-bad: gold, art, manners, and traditions; dangers and rewards are equally intensified.

Warfare, drama, meals, furniture. The majority of the warfare figures are individually conventional: battle, armor, arrows, cannon, sword, gun, manoeuvres, fighter of the battle of life, no quarter, fortress, and such like. Mr. Verver pitches "a tent suggesting that of Alexander" (*GB*, p. 19); Lady John had earned "the right to be refreshingly fanned with an occasional flap of the flag under which she had . . . truly conquered" (*SF*, p. 105). Deceptively casual, such images alert us to undercurrents of strife and will-conflict in the most decorously conducted conversations. Mr. Verver's tent, a blandly jocular reference it would seem, minutely forebodes the predatory habits and inclinations of his millions. Locally effective, these images also ray out beyond their immediate business to present James's cosmos as ceaseless attack and repulse, skirmish and tactics, vigilance and aloneness, with fort gained or citadel lost.

The drama images extend this presentation. Except for fairly common occurrences to mean merely that something "dramatic" is taking place, they stand for the unnatural, the meretricious, the over-ingenious, the glittering front, the false ritual, the social perversion. A play is a made thing, an artificially sustained illusion of life, sometimes congruent to an underlying natural truth or goodness, but not necessarily so, and certainly not itself to be mistaken for natural truth or goodness, though people will forever be proffering it as such and accepting it as such. Though these implications may be more frequent in the works after James's disillusionment with the theater (from about 1897 on) they are by no means confined to them. An extended example may be found in *The Princess Casamassima*. It was at the theater that the "dire little bookbinder" met and was swept away by the Princess: "His imagination projected itself lovingly across the footlights, gilded and coloured the shabby canvas and battered accessories, losing itself so effectually in the fictive world that the end of the piece, however long or however short, brought with it something of the alarm of a stoppage of his personal life. It was impossible to be more friendly to the dramatic illusion" (p. 188). His meeting with the Princess and her companion "made one's own situation seem a play within the play" (p. 208), and in fact, a few pages later Mme. Grandoni informed him that the "person who was hurled over the precipice was the virtuous hero" (p. 213). The drama image returns three times: when Hyacinth noted of the Princess, "Her performance of the part she had undertaken to play was certainly complete, and everything lay before him but the reason she might have for playing it" (II, 19); when Hyacinth, during his prolonged sojourn in the establishment of the

Princess, feared that a wrong movement of any sort would "cause the curtain to fall on the play" (II, 28); and at the very end, when Hyacinth gave his impression of Mme. Grandoni: "She had struck him as ever in the slightly ridiculous position of a confidant of tragedy in whom the heroine, stricken with reserves unfavorable to the dramatic progression, should have ceased to confide" (II, 393). These rather cheerfully explicit images may be compared to the darkly implicit use of the theater image when Strether first meets Chad Newsome, or with the extended metaphor in Book XIX of *The Wings of the Dove*, where the main characters are assigned appropriate roles: "Densher saw himself for the moment as in his purchased stall at the play; the watchful manager [Mrs. Lowder] was in the depths of a box and the poor actress [Kate] in the glare of the foot-lights. But she *passed*, the poor performer—he could see how she always passed; her wig, her paint, her jewels, every mark of her expression impeccable, and her entrance accordingly greeted with the proper round of applause" (II, 34–35).

James's *personae* manage most of the mechanics of living offstage. They rarely sleep or bathe; they appear correctly garbed without apparent opportunity to have changed; they do not cash checks or go shopping, yet all of them sit a great deal before food; they are punctual to meals. Many of the important scenes take place to the accompaniment of tinkling china: Strether's occasions with Maria Gostrey are frequently over meals, and he receives his last lesson in her lore, when, between lunch and dinner, he spies Chad and Mme. de Vionnet together in the boat; Prince Amerigo launches his problem in conversation with Fanny Assingham over tea, with the cups, the pourings and the second helpings punctuating and underlining their talk; when he first goes off with Charlotte Stant, they make for a Gloucester inn; dinner naturally enough gives the narrator of *The Sacred Fount* an excellent post of observation; Milly first faces the complexities of Lancaster Gate over dinner.

For James the passing bell was the dinner gong. His meals unobtrusively tether his fictions to chronological reality, just as the material surroundings, the floors, hangings, chairs, divans, flagstones, railings, steps, and paths hold us within bumping distance of the world of things. We may be referred to a flagstone path without having previously been told that the conversers are walking, or even that they are out-of-doors; and we are usually informed that dinner or tea is in progress or in prospect before we have been told whether it is day or night. As the nudging and the nuzzling of chairs and teacups keep our attention half-attentively upon things, so the dinners, luncheons, and teas prevent us gently from floating off into a clockless world. Menuless affairs, they barely intimate the grosser appetites of the participants. They may be called images because they are time-pegs, their bare unexploited names filling this extra

function. The following typical examples come from pages not far apart in *The Sacred Fount*: “what I had so much remarked while, in the garden before dinner, he held our small company” (p. 25); “Last evening, after dinner, she could feel perhaps for a while that she *was* believed” (p. 34); “when so much of the afternoon had waned as to bring signs of the service of tea in the open air” (p. 94). Among the same pages we also find metaphorical allusions to meals: “she was always under arms, with absences and anxieties like those of a celebrity at a public dinner” (p. 17); “ ‘But the sacred fount is like the greedy man’s description of the turkey as an “awkward” dinner dish. It may be sometimes too much for a single share, but it’s not enough to go round’ ” (p. 29); “a woman who gives absolutely nothing whatever . . . who keeps every crumb for herself” (p. 35).

Both sorts of images are habitual with James. The last sort contributes locally, texturally, usually in the sense of fleshly weakness echoed in the spirit; the other sort contributes to the double-pacing of a work. The character lives in his own subjectively apprehended time-scheme, in which the reader too might easily drift away but for these constant reminders of the habitual demarcations of external, objective, social time. The novelist whose principal interest lies in individual psychology may pace his time-element with reference to whatever illusion of it experience forces upon his character. James, however, for all his microscopy, was not mainly concerned with individual psychology, but with social adjustment morally achieved. However humanly self-consistent he made his people, he refused to separate their personal character from their social character. The conventional time references, together with an unflagging abundance of other normative references, provide the base for his non-deterministic naturalism.

No other objectification of social values was more liberally used, or in a wider range of intensities, than furniture. In *The Spoils of Poynton* the beautiful furnishings are central to everything the story is about; in fact, James felt them to be its “most obvious centre” but substituted Fleda Vetch as “maintainable at less expense” (xii, 127). As it works out, her virtue makes an equation with the beauty of the furniture, both being the spoils of a rapacious, indifferent society. By this means the ethical interest of the story that resides in Fleda is almost indistinguishable from the interest inherent in the furniture. The “good” has become the active agent of the “beautiful,” with this significant difference from such a symbol as Egdon Heath, Chancery, or the “octopus,” that it remains resolutely inanimate, a social fact and pressure and norm.

Furniture may also be used as the sign of the immoral norm. While Mrs. Lowder was exercising her wealthy prerogative of delaying an entrance, James introduced the waiting Merton Densher to her furniture

with such thoroughness that Mrs. Lowder herself can have had few surprises for him when she finally appeared. Her massive, costly, intrusive household lumber was the product of no spring of beauty; nor was Mrs. Lowder the servant of any principle of goodness. She looked like a piece of her own furniture and acted in consonance with its quality. Prince Amerigo represents a poised mean. His house was not in Italy but in Italian history, and its furnishings were the pious and the worldly monuments of Rome, the beautiful and the decadent balanced precariously. His father-in-law lived in rented houses, surrounded by beautiful foreign bargains—art, Prince, and wife—“suitable” for the banks of the Ohio; a truly merciless irony. Milly Theale’s companions, on the other hand, misinterpreted or overstrained the symbolic application of Milly’s rented palazzo to herself. Except as a shrine of mortality, it was one of the kingdoms of earth which she renounced. It too is ironical, but poignantly so, in its failure to contain the ultimate simplicities of Milly’s nature. The grandeur of Lady Aurora’s mansion, “oppressive and fabulous, tempered though it had been by shrouds of brown holland and the nudity of staircases and saloons of which the trappings had been put away” (*PC*, I, 310), on more than one occasion figured as evidence against the aristocracy.

III

We can now for the remainder of this paper consider briefly three image-areas of special interest for the way they work with each other, or with previously discussed image-areas, either contrapuntally or actually blurred together. These image-areas, found thematically used in specific works, are *machinery*, *cage-beast*, and *travel-water*.

Considered together, the innumerable images taken from these fields suggest a world of trial and peril, a society necessarily but perilously mechanized, where individual freedom can with difficulty be maintained. The individual, especially the potentially fine and strong one, may, like Charlotte Stant and Kate Croy, become a beast of prey breaking out of some cage either to encage or attack another individual. The less aggressive person, who seeks freedom in purity of motive and action, may be encaged, may take flight (see Milly’s obsessive travels, as well as those of other characters beginning as far back as Mallet and Winterbourne),⁷ or may elect self-immolation.

Many times an image will have its roots in two or even all three of these areas, the machines will be boats, or the boats will act as cages, or water will roar or imprison, or sinking in water will shift to bird-flight. The following mixed metaphor draws all three fields together: “. . . the summer stars called to us in vain. We had ignored them in our crystal

⁷ *Roderick Hudson* (1876) and *Daisy Miller* (1879).

cage, among our twinkling lamps; no more free really to alight than if we had been dashing in a locked railway-train across a lovely land" (*SF*, p. 200). All of the fields, separately or together, produce images having an effect that may loosely be called claustrophobic—society, or a group, being the shut-in as often as the special individual. Lord Mark responded to Milly's request for information about the social fabric with the question: "... was there anything but the groping and pawing [beast image], that of the vague billows of some great greasy sea in mid-Channel, of masses of bewildered people trying to 'get' they didn't know what or where?" (*WD*, p. 150). To Strether the same intimation appeared in shape more glamorous but no less menacing: "Then there was something in the great world covertly tigerish, which came to him across the lawn and in the charming air as a waft from the jungle" (*AI*, p. 219). In Venice they "were all together, for that matter, like fishes in a crystal pool" (*WD*, II, 213). "Susie . . . would have drowned her very self for her [Milly]" (*WD*, II, 82). Again: "It was as if he had discovered some short cut [travel] to the common doom" (*SF*, p. 22). When in Book v of *The Golden Bowl* Charlotte Stant reached the baleful climax of her history, James called upon images from the three groups in rendering her "at bay": *beasts, jungle, traps, hard glare of water*. In "In the Cage" the title symbol found its most literal application; the employment of the title symbol in "The Beast in the Jungle" is beyond summary description or praise. As the editors of the *Notebooks* justly said, it "is one of the most striking examples of how James could intensify his effect through the repetition of a dominant symbol" (*Notebooks*, p. 312). In both stories, of course, the images convey inordinate repression and need for escape.

For his mechanical images James did not usually choose objects or processes in themselves disagreeable, but made allusions reasonably neutral except as they betray some individual trapped or rigidified by society. So he introduced Mr. Crick, "who insisted on having no more personal identity than the omnibus conductor stopping before you but just long enough to bite into a piece of pasteboard with a pair of small steel jaws" (*IT*, p. 242). Of one of the spiritually exhausted ladies in *The Sacred Fount* he noticed "her whole compromised machinery of thought and speech" (p. 97); again, the victim's smile "came back as if with an audible click—as a gas-burner makes a pop when you light it" (p. 148). So for the whole battery: ladders, balloons, steamships, ticking watches, lubricants and crunching keys. The fluid Prince Amerigo commented with prescience as well as irony upon the American moral sense as he observed it in his father-in-law: it is "like the 'lightning elevator' in one of Mr. Verver's fifteen-storey buildings. Your moral sense works by steam—it sends you up like a rocket" (*GB*, p. 31). For *The Princess Casamassima*, James used *light-dark* as the area from which he drew the main

thematic images, especially associating *light* with the Princess and her world. In revision, toward the end of the book the Princess's light became mechanical, like May Server's conversation and smile: "she turned her golden light on Hyacinth" (II, 201); later we have: "Her gentleness, when she turned it on, was quite divine" (II, 398), *turned it on* being a revision for *was in the mood for it*. Another revision toward light is worth mentioning. Hyacinth and Prince Casamassima have just seen the Princess and Paul Muniment, now lovers, return to her darkened house. James put in the *light* symbol and touched up the mechanical by adding the passages enclosed in parentheses: ". . . Mr. Robinson made no answer; he only gazed at the closed door an instant and then, disengaging himself, walked straight away, leaving the victim of the wrong he could even then feel as deeper than his own to shake, in the dark, a helpless foolish (gold-headed) stick at the indifferent house (where Madame Grandoni's bedroom light glimmered aloft)" (II, 324).

Among the major works, *The Golden Bowl* and *The Wings of the Dove* are richest in imagery. What James said of Maggie Verver's imagery, though in her case he exhibited only one piece of evidence, can be taken as an almost complete description of the thematic imagery of the former novel: "She had images . . . that were drawn from steamers and trains, from a familiarity with 'lines,' a command of 'own' cars, from an experience of continents and seas . . . from vast modern machineries and facilities" (*GB*, p. 15). In certain parts, especially as Maggie and Charlotte near the edges of desperation, the cage-beast images flood the scene, but they are less pervasive than the images of travel and machinery and "ownership" (*money* or *property*). If these latter do not alone set the tone, they create the story, inasmuch as it is the story of ever-moving homeless persons, trapped by rarefied rigidities of society, all in some sense buying and selling each other.

The surface tone, however, is set by the title symbol and the twenty-three images of gold or gilt (not counting the references to the bowl itself) that support it. Less frequently there are figurative uses of crystal, the bowl being of gilded crystal. Some of the gold images are lyrical: "golden glow," "golden peace" (of autumn), "golden isles," "golden years," "the golden flame—oh the golden flame!" But the majority of instances are blendings with the image-areas just discussed. Some are repressive: Maggie's "gilded cage," the "gilt bars" of Charlotte's cage, the shaft of a gold-mine. In these, of course, the mechanical note is also present. Others have the mechanical flavor without the repressive: Mr. Verver's imitated "golden tone," "gilded image," "golden bridge"; some convey the money motif, with which the novel is saturated: "chink of gold," and various references to gold as money. A more extended example—one which knits up all the above areas except *travel*—will show how they

function in place. But first a simple mechanical image, which precedes the more complicated cluster. Fanny and the Prince are at tea, when the arrival of Charlotte Stant is announced: "The Prince expressed clear surprise—a transparency through which his eye met his friend's with a certain hardness of concussion" (p. 37). Then, after the entrance of Charlotte into the room:

He knew her special beauty of movement and line when she turned her back, and the perfect working of all her main attachments, that of some wonderful finished instrument, something intently made for exhibition, for a prize. He knew above all the extraordinary fineness of her flexible waist, the stem of an expanded flower, which gave her a likeness also to some long loose silk purse, well filled with gold-pieces, but having been passed empty through a finger-ring that held it together. It was as if, before she turned to him, he had weighed the whole thing in his open palm and even heard a little the chink of the metal. (p. 47)

Redness and red objects are mentioned eleven times, for James a rather unusual insistence upon one color. The red images are more violent than the gold, sometimes destructive: "red spark" (twice), "red rocket," "red glow" from burning ships (twice), "blood," "rouge," "Bright red spot, red as some monstrous ruby" (on Maggie's complexion when aroused). Red is only once directly joined to gold, "crimson and gold," in a passage on Fanny Assingham.

The gold and red images of *The Golden Bowl*, then, along with other expensive, beautiful matters, provide an harmonious setting for the symbol of the bowl itself, all gracefully consonant with action and theme. The bowl has an invisible flaw; the uses of gold are morally ambiguous. But in the last analysis, the deep meanings of the story come neither from the bowl nor from the circumambient gold. Indeed we may find the bowl-breaking scene slightly anti-climactic, a restatement of what we already feel and know, a final impertinence of Fanny Assingham. Chiefly, the golden and red series color up the *cage-beast* and the all important *mechanical* series, discharging an alchemical office by giving off their tone and substance in the service of James's golden scenes and pictures.

The most expressive of all James's thematic images is the water image that runs through *The Wings of the Dove*. References to water occur in the other works in a long gamut of connections and intentions, but never so pressingly and evocatively as when applied to the great case of Milly Theale.

Directed at Mrs. Lowder, they are satirically mechanical: "Mrs. Lowder . . . steering in the other quarter a course in which she called at subjects as if they were islets in an archipelago, continued to allow [Milly and Lord Mark] their ease, . . . Mrs. Lowder . . . resumed, with a splash of her screw, her cruise among the islands" (pp. 161-162). One such

image is applied to Milly, with a mechanical touch that at least partly misses Milly and recoils upon her reflector, Mrs. Stringham:

It was her nature, once for all—a nature that reminded Mrs. Stringham of the term always used in the newspapers about the great new steamers, the inordinate number of “feet of water” they drew; . . . Milly drew the feet of water, and odd though it might seem that a lonely girl, who was not robust and who hated sound and show, should stir the stream like a leviathan, her companion floated off with the sense of rocking violently at her side. (pp. 112–113)

The above images are similar to the travel-water images found in *The Golden Bowl*. Many more, however, use water, not as a convenient road-bed, but as an element, and an elemental force. It is often ambivalent, a life-giving, death-dealing force. I have already quoted Lord Mark's water image characterizing society. Numerous others surround, engulf, Milly herself: “The sense was constant for her that their relation might have been afloat, like some island of the south, in a great warm sea that represented, for every conceivable chance, a margin, an outer sphere, of general emotion; and the effect of the occurrence of anything in particular was to make the sea submerge the island, the margin flood the text. The great wave now for a moment swept over” (p. 199). “Ocean currents” menaced; one might be “launched in some current that would lose itself in the sea of science” (p. 231); “Kate . . . had but to open the flood-gate: the current moved in its mass” (p. 274); it was lonely to be “a creature saved from a shipwreck” (II, 53), to be the “survivor of a general wreck” (p. 241). “She was *in* it [the summer sea], as in the ark of her deluge” (II, 143). Her tears were the “sign of her consciously rounding her protective promontory, quitting the blue gulf of comparative ignorance, and reaching her view of the troubled sea” (II, 144).

Milly's party removed to Venice, where the dénouement took place. The water-girt city became “a Venice all of evil” (II, 259); for twenty days it stormed, while Densher waited and Milly turned her face to the wall and Mrs. Stringham carried messages to Densher through the storm, “her face . . . and the veil too—as splashed as if the rain were her tears” (II, 269).

The water images are often inextricably associated with the beast-cage series from which the title symbol by most delicate opposition draws its special meaning. The beast series mainly elucidates Mrs. Lowder and Kate Croy, especially in their effects upon Densher and Milly, and in the effects of Mrs. Lowder upon Kate herself. We may begin with a rather condensed image applied by Kate to Mrs. Lowder:

“She fixed upon me herself, settled on me with her wonderful gilded claws.”

“You speak,” Densher observed, “as if she were a vulture.”

"Call it an eagle—with a gilded beak as well, and (wings for great flights). If she's (a thing of the air), in short—say at once (a great seamed silk balloon)—I never myself got into her car. I was her choice." (p. 73)

A related image was employed to describe the result upon Densher of this conversation. ". . . for, all the rest of this day and the next, her easy injunction ['Ah do what you like!' (p. 74)], tossed off that way as she turned her beautiful back, was like the crack of a great whip in the (blue air), the (high element) in which Mrs. Lowder hung" (p. 75). Mrs. Lowder, previously called a lioness in her cage (p. 30), seems from the images to stand in relation to Kate as Kate stands in relation to Densher. A later sequence finds Milly in Densher's place with relation to Kate, and for the first time the symbol of dove is applied to Milly:

[Milly] had felt herself alone with a creature who paced like a panther. That was a violent image . . . she had now the sense to find words.

"And yet without Susie I shouldn't have had *you*."

It had been at this point, however, that Kate (flickered highest). "Oh you may very well loathe me yet! . . ."

"Why do you say such things to me? . . ."

"Because you're a dove." (pp. 282–283)

I have put in parentheses certain images of height in the above passages to prepare for a tentative comment. Images of height, common enough in James, here in the early part of the novel seem to stand for the aristocratic world of Mrs. Lowder, which Kate desires to possess and Milly to experience. Mrs. Lowder says of Kate: "I want to see her high, high up—high up and in the light" (p. 82). And we first met Milly on a height ". . . a view of great extent and beauty, but thrown forward and vertiginous. . . . [Here on] the dizzy edge of it, she was seated at her ease. [Mrs. Stringham, alarmed, thinks of suicide] She was looking down on the kingdoms of the earth, . . . Was she choosing among them or did she want them all?" (pp. 123–124). The question may occur to the reader: Who, after all, was the dove? To flicker high in the blue air, as Kate has done, suits a dove; and our first view of Milly suggests an eagle in its aerie—at least it is stipulated in the passage just quoted that she has not been surveying the kingdoms of earth in order to reject them, though later of course this is exactly what she does. Much later Kate repeats to Densher her image of Milly as a dove, this time connecting it with pearls, thus supplying Densher with a compound image for Milly, dove-pearl, which as we shall see apparently lingers in his unconscious memory. Kate, fingering Milly's pearls, says: "She's a dove, . . . and one somehow doesn't think of doves as bejewelled. Yet they suit her down to the ground" (II, 218). Densher immediately seizes upon the ambivalence

of the dove figure. To Kate, he feels, it must suggest the "great power" of Milly's wealth by analogy with the dove's capacity for "wondrous flights." But to himself another meaning comes: "It even came to him dimly that such wings could in a given case—*had*, truly, in the case with which he was concerned—spread themselves for protection. Hadn't they, for that matter, lately taken an inordinate reach, and weren't Kate and Mrs. Lowder, weren't Susan Shepherd and he, wasn't *he* in particular, nestling under them to a great increase of immediate ease?" (II, 218). Is not the ambiguity of the dove image, in fact, one of the means by which James spread *his* loving and protective wings over Kate? For I take it that Kate (like Charlotte Stant) carries with her into exile even more of our pitying imagination than abides with Milly (or Maggie).

But the connections are not yet complete, for they have not yet gone to water. The height image more than once moves in this direction. Milly, for example, had an image of "remaining aloft in the divine dustless air, where she would hear but the splash of the water against the stone" (II, 147). After Milly's death the stone and water occur to Densher as "a vivid mental image" descriptive of his correspondence with Mrs. Stringham, his remaining connection with Milly, in relation to the troubling reality of Kate's presence: ". . . he saw it as a small emergent rock in the waste of waters, the bottomless grey expanse of straightness . . . and it was queer enough that on his emergent rock, clinging to it and to Susan Shepherd, he should figure himself as hidden from view" (II, 391).

This outline by no means exhausts the linked images of height, dove, beast, cage, water, and pearl. The full chain suspends and animates the dense world of the novel, imparting meaning and life. It extends through to the end. When Kate burns Milly's letter to Densher, the act has a magnificence to the reader; to Densher it calls up another and lost glory: ". . . a revelation the loss of which was like the sight of a priceless pearl cast before his eyes—his pledge given not to save it—into the fathomless sea" (II, 396). The image epitomizes the relations of Kate, Milly, and Densher, and sets an appropriate note for the slow drawing together of the great curtains. What remains shows that Kate too rises to the higher knowledge, though we may be sure it has a different coloration for her. She says: "I used to call her, in my stupidity—for want of anything better—a dove. Well she stretched out her wings, and it was to *that* they reached. They cover us" (II, 404). But it is too late. The final words *must* be: "We shall never be again as we were!"

HOFSTRA COLLEGE
Hempstead, N. Y.